# logotype

**SENATE**

**Subject: Leave of absence/termination of studies**

**Origin: Learning and Teaching Committee, 3 June 2010**

**Senate action required:** Senate approval is sought for changes in the procedures for handling leave of absence and termination of studies, and associated changes in Regulation IX *Registration, Attendance, Leave of Absence, Withdrawal and Transfer*. These changes are for introduction with effect from the start of 2010-11. A Working Group report, submitted to Programme Quality Team and to LTC is attached, whilst the relevant Minute of LTC is set out below.

LTC considered a Working Group report concerning changes in procedures for handling leave of absence and termination of studies.

It was noted that one of the additions proposed to Regulation IX included a requirement (para 35(vi)) that where leave of absence was due to ill health, a student would normally be required to provide evidence from an appropriate professional source to support the case that a return to studies was appropriate. The Departmental Administrators’ Liaison Group (DALG) had foreseen practical difficulties in implementing this requirement and was concerned about the extra workload potentially involved in chasing such evidence. Programme Quality Team had been broadly supportive of including the requirement, recognising the need to balance the interests of the individual student with those of other staff and students in the University community, but had asked for information to be sought about relevant procedures in other HEIs. Enquiries had been made and, as indicated in the agenda paper (Annex A), out of 22 institutions which responded, 21 currently had a system in place whereby students were required to show evidence of their fitness to return to study. Members of LTC were nevertheless not entirely comfortable about including the clause, being doubtful as to what would be deemed to constitute acceptable evidence, noting that two universities which had such a ‘fitness to return system’ were considering abandoning it because they had doubts about its effectiveness, and noting the advice from the law firm Martineau that the University needed to be cautious about implementing such a policy. Some members queried why it was not proposed to seek evidence of ‘fitness to return’ when leave of absence had been granted for reasons other than ill health. It was felt that the issue required further consideration and that for the moment, the additional clause 35(vi) should be omitted from the regulation changes proposed.

In the course of discussion, it was remarked that students who were permitted to repeat an assessment following an impaired performance claim were not required to provide evidence of being fit to undertake the reassessment. It was felt this was a possible anomaly in the light of the new procedures and that it might need to be revisited.

LTC considered it acceptable to provide a list of reasons for granting leave of absence. It was emphasised that the list was for guidance and was not intended to be definitive. It was noted however that there was no mention of leave of absence for sport-related reasons, and it was suggested reference be made to the separate procedures already in place for handling such cases.

**It was resolved, on the recommendation of Programme Quality Team, to recommend to Senate the changes in procedures for handling leave of absence and termination of studies, and associated changes in Regulation IX, as set out in the agenda paper, with effect from the start of 2010-11, subject to the points noted above and excluding therefore the addition of clause 35(vi).**